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The President's Daily Brief

April 24, 1976

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1

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LATE ITEM

Lebanon: A Beirut radio broadcast this morning reports that President Franjiyah has signed the constitutional amendment that permits the election of a new president. The broadcast adds that Franjiyah has forwarded a copy of the amendment to the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. (This information updates the article on page 1.)

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LEBANON: *President Franjiyah has not yet signed the constitutional amendment that would permit the election of a new president, as many hoped he would yesterday. The twice-postponed meeting of principal Christian leaders to discuss this matter is now set for today.*

The leftists, to underscore Kamal Jumblatt's threat to establish a rival Muslim government unless Franjiyah resigns by May 2, yesterday set up a new municipal council in Tripoli under their control.

Although Syrian-controlled PLA forces have established a buffer zone between the combatants in Beirut, sporadic exchanges of artillery and mortar fire continue to expose the fragility of the truce. Neither the Christian nor Palestinian forces charged with policing the cease-fire in their respective areas have been willing to crack down hard on violators or to clear disputed areas.

The Syrian press, meanwhile, has given increasing play to charges that the US, Israel, and Egypt are working in collusion against Syria in Lebanon in order to distract attention from the Sinai accord and undermine Palestinian-Syrian solidarity.

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These suspicions have apparently gained considerable currency among senior Syrian officials as well. President Asad told Senator Mathias recently that he suspects the US and Israel of trying to keep Syria tied down in Lebanon and preoccupied with issues extraneous to peace negotiations.

* * *

A member of French President Giscard's staff has told US embassy officers that Paris would be willing to send a "symbolic" military peace-keeping force to Lebanon.

The French official made clear that Paris envisions a small military contingent that would primarily serve as an "optical" counterweight to the Syrian presence. He emphasized that the French would not accept a "policeman's role" and would not participate without the unanimous consent of the parties immediately involved.

President Giscard is under strong political pressure, especially from orthodox Gaullists, to play a leading role in resolving Lebanon's troubles. Giscard has shown a penchant for acting as an international middleman on economic and political issues during his two years in office.

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CHINA: *The unidentified Chinese vessel operating in the South Pacific has continued to move in a southeasterly direction and is now about 4,000 nautical miles from the mainland.*

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If this vessel is in fact a submarine, it is probably the nuclear-powered Han. The distance and time involved make a diesel-powered unit--a Chinese R-class

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for example--an unlikely candidate. Recent satellite photography shows that the Han is not at the two bases--Hulutao and Hsiao-ping-tao--where it has been seen most often in the past. Because another submarine base farther to the south at Chingtao, where the Han has been seen previously, has not been covered recently, we are unable to state positively that the Han is the vessel in question.

Assuming the Han is involved, we do not know where it is going or the nature of its mission. Training in open ocean operations and navigation is the most likely reason, but the Chinese could have another purpose in mind.

* * *

CHINA: *The current campaign of criticism against Teng Hsiao-ping has engendered widespread dissatisfaction and bitterness among both middle and lower level cadres and the general population.*

Some lower level officials, a number of Chinese serving abroad, and even tour guides in China have shown a surprising willingness to discuss candidly Chinese internal politics with foreigners--a departure from attitudes that have prevailed for decades. Even more unusual, a considerable number of officials seem willing openly to criticize Mao Tse-tung himself.

Widespread and sometimes outspoken support for Teng and for the policies he and the late Chou En-lai represented has been evident since the initial announcement in early February that the former vice premier had been blocked from the premiership. Many Chinese have commented that the charges against Teng are false and that he has been treated unfairly. The unhappiness with recent events seems to be quite widespread; Teng, in fact may be more popular today than he was before the campaign against him began.

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There seems little doubt that Mao's political stock has fallen and that many Chinese blame him for the latest leadership upheaval. The current criticism of the Chairman appears to surpass that which surfaced following the failures of the Great Leap Forward in the early 1960s. Moreover, it is being expressed openly and directly rather than indirectly and by analogy, as was the case in the 1960s.

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USSR-SOUTHERN AFRICA:

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NOTES

Moroccan *forces are engaged in what Rabat hopes will be the final clean-up operations against Polisario guerrillas in* Western Sahara.

Military operations began over a week ago to clean out small pockets of Polisario forces. [redacted] the Moroccans have had some success in driving the guerrillas from the Guelta area. Moroccan fighter aircraft have been supporting the operations, and in one instance may have drawn SA-7 missile fire from the Polisario forces. 25X1

The Moroccans claim that Algerian forces have shifted positions in the southwest border area within the past week. Although we cannot yet confirm any major shifts, the latest satellite photography shows that some MIG-21 fighters have flown to the airfield at Bechar for the first time. 25X1

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France *and* West Germany

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Six years after it first became operational, the Soviets *have assigned the MIG-23 Flogger to their strategic air defense forces.*

Satellite photography showed 12 of these aircraft at Smolensk, an air defense fighter base some 200 miles west of Moscow. The aircraft is the only operational Soviet fighter with some capability to detect, track, and engage targets flying below it. That capability, although rudimentary by US standards, should provide limited improvement in Soviet ability to cope with low altitude attackers. 25X1

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The Portuguese *military is on full alert to counter any attempt to disrupt the national legislative assembly election tomorrow.*

The alert reflects concern that there may be a repetition at the polls of the violent incidents that have marred the three-week-long election campaign. On Thursday, security forces were rushed to key diplomatic missions in Lisbon in the wake of a bomb blast, which destroyed the Cuban embassy.

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